

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) spoke on the House Floor today in support of a resolution honoring Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, her staff and victims of the tragic shooting that took place on Saturday, January 8, 2010, in Tucson, Arizona. See below for a link to the video and his remarks.

“This week, we pause the work of this House to mourn the lost lives of six of our fellow citizens—one born on that day of tragedy and carnage when thousands were slain in an equally indiscriminate, heinous act of hate—citizens shot dead on Saturday in Tucson, Arizona in pursuit of their ‘right to peaceably assemble.’ We come, as well, to honor those who risked their lives to save others; to pray for the lives of the wounded; and to pray for our colleague and friend, Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords.

“Today, this temple of representative democracy is a sadder place. But Congresswoman Giffords, with her intelligence and her toughness, her public spirit and her charm, will—God willing and with the extraordinary medical care she is receiving—soon return to this body and again be a practitioner of and model for the principles of civil debate and thoughtful deliberation on which this temple is founded.

“Congresswoman Giffords was attacked doing the work that is at the heart of democracy: listening to her neighbors. Each one of us has done that work; each one of us has come back bearing their fears and their hopes, their convictions and their visions for the future. Some are everyday hopes; some are matters of life and death. But in each case, we bring those hopes here and speak for our neighbors as best we can.

“We do not know the specific motive which led the perpetrator of this crime to act. Nor can we draw conclusions as to specific causes. But it is a time for us to reflect on the heightened anger being projected in our public debate and the daily denigration of those with whom we disagree. And it is appropriate that the wrenching, shocking, senseless violence of that day compel us all to reflect on our own responsibility to temper our words and respect those with whom we disagree, lest the failure to do so give incitement to the angriest and most unstable among us.

“Let us speak for our neighbors in a new spirit of unity. Not a false or shallow unity, not a unity that wishes away our differences or our discords—but a unity founded on our reverence for our democracy’s most precious, most fragile gift: its power to resolve without violence our weightiest

questions.

“In a much darker time than ours, from the edge of a great war, President Lincoln addressed these words to the men and women whom, even in the war’s depths, he refused to see as anything other than his fellow Americans: ‘We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.’

“There are in every society and every culture and every nation those who reject that creed. But if we love our country, if we honor our oath to our country, our Constitution, and to our nation of laws, we must live by those words. There is, perhaps, nothing we can do that will prevent the mindless violence committed by the few—but we can and must appeal to the best instincts of the many.

“To the families of the fallen, we extend our sympathy.

“To the survivors, we extend our prayers for a full and speedy recovery.

“And to our colleague, Gabby, we extend our love and our hopes for her early return to this chamber and our ranks.

“In this time, we have all come together, comforted one another, reached out to one another, and lifted one another up. May that sentiment not pass quickly from this body or this country.”